

That is why today I am announcing four steps we are taking to fight back. First, I have asked the task force to report back on their progress and to let me know if there are other actions the Federal Government can take beyond those underway to stop these crimes. Second, I have instructed the ATF to inform churches of any steps they can take to protect themselves from arsonists. Churches throughout the South will be visited by ATF special agents to answer any questions church leaders and parishioners may have. We are also making this information available to national church organizations for distribution to their members. Third, I am announcing my support for the bipartisan legislation introduced by Congressmen John Conyers and Henry Hyde to make it easier to bring Federal prosecutions against those who attack houses of worship. I look forward to working with Congress to make it even stronger. And finally, I'm announcing that we are establishing a new toll-free number that is now available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you have information about who is responsible for these churches fires, please call it. It's 1-888-ATF-FIRE. That's 1-888-ATF-F-I-R-E.

In the end, we must all face up to the responsibility to end this violence. We must say to those who would feed their neighbors what Martin Luther King called "the stale bread of hatred and spoiled meat of racism": That is not America; that is not our way. We must come together, black and white alike, to smother the fires of hatred that fuel this violence.

I am pleased that the National Council of Churches of Christ, one of the largest interfaith groups in the country, has spoken out against

these crimes and is mobilizing to assist in the rebuilding of damaged churches. I encourage communities everywhere where churches have been burned to roll up their sleeves and help the folks there to rebuild their churches.

Religious freedom is one of the founding principles of our democracy, and the black church has historically been the center of worship, self-help, and community life for millions of families in our country. That's why it was so hard for Reverend Terrence Mackey to break the news to his daughter last June when they woke to find an ash-scarred field in the spot where only the day before stood their church home, Mount Zion AME Church in Greeleyville, South Carolina. Reverend Mackey reassured his daughter with these words—he told her, "They didn't burn down the church. They burned down the building in which we hold church. The church is still inside all of us." On June 15th, Reverend Mackey, his daughter, and his congregation will march from the site of the old church to a brand new building. And all Americans will march with them in spirit.

We must all do our part to end this rash of violence. America is a great country because for more than 200 years we have strived to honor the religious convictions, the freedom, the extraordinary religious diversity of our people. The only way we can succeed in the 21st century is if we unleash the full power of those convictions and that diversity and refuse to let anything divide or defeat us.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion on Juvenile Crime in Las Vegas, Nevada

June 9, 1996

The President. Thank you very much.

[At this point, moderator Kirby Burgess, director, Clark County Youth and Family Services Center, welcomed the President and introduced roundtable participants. Gov. Bob Miller of Nevada then reviewed steps taken in the State to deal with juvenile crime, and Clark County

Undersheriff Richard Wingett described the juvenile violent crime problem in Las Vegas. Mr. Burgess introduced Shane Quick, Anthony Covarrubias, and Stanley Johnson, teenagers enrolled in alternative sentencing programs. Mr. Quick described his experience in a residential drug treatment program and concluded by saying that he was nervous.]

The President. You're doing great. You're doing great.

Mr. Burgess. He's an honest young man, Mr. President.

[*Mr. Covarrubias described his rehabilitation through the Freedom Program, an intensive supervision program.*]

The President. How does it work, this Freedom Program?

[*Mr. Covarrubias said he was under house arrest and had to check in with the program twice a day, but could earn privileges for good behavior.*]

The President. Why do you think it's helped you?

Mr. Covarrubias. Because now I'm going to counseling. I'm getting along with my parents. It's keeping me out of trouble, keeping me off the streets.

The President. Is that your mother out there?

Mr. Covarrubias. Yes.

The President. Give her a hand, and your family there. [Applause]

Mr. Burgess. Tony, what I'd like for you guys to do is speak up because the press is here and all the audience is here and these microphones are a little—

The President. What's the difference in the program Tony's in and the one Shane's in? Shane, what's your program called?

[*Mr. Quick said that he had completed the West Care residential treatment and was required to report to a probation officer once a week.*]

The President. Mr. Wingett, do you know how many—do either of you know, maybe Kirby knows it—how many young people does your probation officer work with? Do you know? Do you know how many people?

Mr. Burgess. Yes, sir, I do, Mr. President.

The President. How many?

[*Mr. Burgess said the average caseload for community supervision was 60 to 80 children.*]

The President. So you check in once a week. And you check in twice a day. You have to do random drug tests?

Mr. Quick. No. I did; I did do random drug tests.

The President. For how long?

Mr. Quick. Three months.

The President. Okay.

[*Mr. Burgess asked Mr. Covarrubias how he would behave differently when he returned to his neighborhood. Mr. Covarrubias responded that he would not hang around with his friends as much and would walk away from them if they asked him to commit crimes.*]

Mr. Burgess. Mr. President, Stanley Johnson, who is to your left, is 13 years old—[laughter]—he is involved—

The President. You did pretty good today.

[*Mr. Burgess described the New Directions program of 24-hour supervision in which Mr. Johnson was enrolled. Mr. Johnson explained that his probation officer, Mr. Garcia, helped him improve his grades. Mr. Burgess then asked the teen to describe how his mother was involved in the program.*]

Mr. Johnson. What?

The President. About your mother.

[*Mr. Burgess invited parent Joy Gladwin to comment, and she described the New Directions parent support group in which she participated because her son was enrolled in the program.*]

The President. Do you work with Stan?

Ms. Gladwin. No, I'm just a friend.

The President. And how did you find this program? How did you get involved with it?

[*Ms. Gladwin explained her son's enrollment in the program.*]

The President. Stan, do you like doing this program every day? Do you think these folks are helping you?

Mr. Johnson. Yes.

The President. Do you think it's going to help you stay in school?

Mr. Johnson. Yes.

The President. Do you have a feeling—do you think they really care about you?

Mr. Johnson. Mm-hmm. [Laughter]

Ms. Gladwin. Mr. Garcia does care very, very much for all of these kids.

The President. Is Mr. Garcia here?

Ms. Gladwin. Yeah, he is.

The President. Where is he? Stand up there, Mr. Garcia. [Applause]

Ms. Gladwin. He's really been a large benefit to these kids. He knows when to push them and when not to, and it helps tremendously.

[*Mr. Burgess noted that many of the children were from single-parent homes, and Ms.*

Gladwin described the importance of the program to her family.]

The President. How much of the problems that young people have—I mean that they're so much greater today than they have been in previous generations. How much of it do you think is due to the fact that children are alone so much more than they used to be?

Ms. Gladwin. A lot. Unfortunately, there's a lot more single parents. And it's very difficult for us.

Governor Miller. We have the highest percentage of single mothers in the United States here in Nevada, Mr. President.

The President. You know, a phenomenal percentage of single parents are spending more than 20 percent of their income on child care when their children are very young. And then when they don't need literal, physical child care anymore it becomes almost impossible for them to do anything. That's one of the reasons that these programs are so important.

Ms. Gladwin. Yes, they are. The question I have to ask is why isn't there more programs like the New Directions?

The President. Well, maybe I can talk a little about that.

First, let me say what the good news is. The bad news is that the country has figured out how to reduce the crime rate, but the crime rate among children under 18 is still going up. For 3 years in the country as a whole the crime rate has gone down now, and that's good, but juvenile crime still continues to rise. Now, there are, however, some things that seem to be working. Every one of them seems to be related to giving young people an organized, positive way to spend their time.

And I could give you just a lot of examples. We've worked hard, for example, to help communities that wanted to set up a curfew set up curfews. But the ones—the curfew programs that really work are ones where the kids also have something to do. I was in New Orleans last week, and they've got a curfew center there so that if a young person violates the curfew, they don't put them in jail, fine them, or just drop them back off at home and let them go out and get in trouble again. They take them to the curfew center, and they try to come up with a plan to help the kids with their lives.

Long Beach, California, has a school uniform policy because they had such a gang problem

there. And the kids designed their own uniform, school by school. But it's reduced violence and other kinds of problems there.

There are different ways that are dealing with this. A lot of schools are trying to stay open later, and a lot of places are trying to develop programs like you've got here, where you try to get parents as well as the young people involved in community restitution and rehabilitation efforts.

But the main thing I want to say, to get back to answering your question, is our country has got to make a commitment to understand that normally when we see a serious crime, that's the end of years of difficulties that a lot of people have, and that we simply cannot jail our way out of America's crime problem. We are going to have to invest some more money in prevention. And I say that as somebody who started out in law enforcement as attorney general over 20 years ago—almost 20 years ago. And when I was Governor, I built a lot of prison cells, and I passed a lot of laws toughening penalties, and you know, we had a very tough approach. But these young people—somebody has got to do something to give them a chance to live an organized, positive life.

And when we wrote the crime bill—it's very interesting. We passed the crime bill in 1994. I'm proud of the fact that it's putting 100,000 more police officers on the street. But I said then and I say again, I'm sure you would corroborate this, a lot of these police officers—and a lot of the good they're doing is they're stopping crime from happening in the first place, not just catching criminals more quickly. And we have—all I can tell you is we need to build more support nationally and in every State legislature in the country and every local government in the country for these kind of programs, because the social and economic realities in which a lot of these young folks are growing up in put them under a lot of pressure that people our age didn't face when we were their age. It's just a plain truth. And we have to find an organized, disciplined, caring environment that we—we need to help their parents and support them. There's so many—so many single parents out there doing the best they can.

And I was sitting there—I was looking at Shane and Tony and Stan and thinking, you know, one way or the other these three kids are our future. They're our future, and we've

got to take responsibility at least to give them the best chance they can to make a good future for themselves and for the rest of us. And I want to thank you, Kirby, for spending your life on this.

Mr. Burgess. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you for doing it.

Another point. I just want to make one more point and then I'd like to go back and let anybody else talk who wants to talk. For it is amazing to me how much some of these community programs can do on a modest budget. We're not talking about spending a fortune here. A lot of these community-based programs are so much less expensive than a lot of the more expensive things that happen later on.

If the program Shane was in works and he never develops a serious drug habit, then it's a lot less expensive than treating somebody for a serious drug problem later on. That's just one example, you know. Whatever it costs for Tony to have somebody to check in twice a day with, gives him a chance to graduate from high school, maybe go on to college, get a good job, have a good, successful life. Whatever it costs will be a pittance of what we would all pay if his life took a different turn.

And the same thing is true for every young person. So I want to say that I was so impressed when I read about these programs, and I have been almost obsessed with this juvenile crime problem, not only because it makes our people feel less safe but because of what's happening to all these kids we're losing.

And I just also want to say one other thing, to urge you to support the Governor, and you've got your county commissioner and the mayor here; the two Senators are here. Just now coming into our schools there is another baby boom generation. A lot of people don't know this and haven't focused on this yet. I'm the oldest of the children born right after World War II, and we're the biggest—the people of my age and down, about 15 or 16 years younger than me, are the biggest group of Americans ever born into this country. There is now a group, just now starting into grade school, that when they get in their school years will be slightly bigger than we are as a generation. And if we don't turn this juvenile crime problem around by the time they're 13 to 16, you cannot imagine what we're going to be grappling with.

These young people are actually in a group of Americans that aren't particularly numerous.

Their parents were of a generation where people had relatively fewer children, and there weren't so many people in their child-bearing years. I don't want to use this—this will sound wrong, but these kids have, in a way, by going through this, have given us a chance to figure out for future generations how to rescue young people and support mothers like Joy. And we better take advantage of them and we better do it now, because if we wait another 5 or 6 years, the dimensions of the problem will be roughly 2 to 3 times greater than they are now. And it will be unmanageable.

So I still—my own view is the right thing for the National Government to do is to provide the resources and the legal and other support necessary to let communities pick those programs that are most likely to work best for them, because not every program works the same in every place. And the truth is that every one of these programs, you've got to have some caring adult and some system that works, somebody who can stand up like this gentleman down here and get a round of applause because the kids relate to him or her, as the case may be.

So I don't think that we should be prescribing what works. What we have tried to do in our administration is go around and find things that are working, and if people are having some trouble spreading it, like the uniform policy, the curfews, or whatever, we try to help them do that. And otherwise, we try to provide what money we could pass in the Congress to let the communities decide what works best. And that's what I think we should do.

Senator Harry Reid. Mr. President.

The President. Senator Reid.

[*Senator Reid said the President's leadership had protected Federal programs such as the drug-free schools and school-to-work efforts.*]

The President. Well, to be explicit, when we fought the crime bill in 1994, there were people who basically said all Washington should do is pass penalties and build prisons; that we shouldn't put the police out there, we shouldn't ban assault weapons, we shouldn't have a waiting period for handguns, and that it was a waste of money to give funds to communities for these prevention programs. You remember the debate very well.

And the most important thing I want to focus on today, I mean, I think the evidence is clear now on what we did on the others, that we

were right. But the most important thing is we didn't win the whole fight on the prevention programs, as you know, although both of you tried to help me. But when you see programs like this, you just have to say that every one of these—every young person in the country—every person like Stanley Johnson in the country ought to be in one of these programs who needs it. And until that happens, it shouldn't be a—that ought to be a test.

But maybe we'll turn it around now, thanks to all of you.

[*Mr. Burgess asked the teens for suggestions on improving prevention services. Mr. Quick suggested social events for teens where speakers would talk about the dangers of drugs and gangs.*]

Mr. Burgess. Any final comments, Mr. President?

The President. Well, let's see if anybody—Tony?

Mr. Covarrubias. No, I don't.

The President. Stanley? [*Laughter*]

You're doing great. Let me ask you something. I want to ask you guys something—just one thing. If we weren't here in this big crowd of people, if we were just sitting alone in a room so you didn't have to worry about being on television and wearing a tie and suit—don't be nervous; you look good in it—[*laughter*—and you were trying to tell me what one thing or two things you think I could do or that we could do that would make it possible for more young people to make it, either to stay out of trouble or to get out of trouble if they get in, what do you think we could do to change the way things are in America that would make you feel better about it, that would make you feel better about your future? Is there any one thing you could tell me that you think that we ought to be working on, that would make the biggest difference to the largest number of young people your age?

[*Mr. Quick said that while help was important, the individual had to be willing to change.*]

The President. So that's why you made the other suggestion you did, that at least if you got all the kids together, they would know what was there for them if they were inclined to ask for help.

What about you, Tony?

Mr. Covarrubias. I can't really think of nothing.

The President. You think the program has been a good thing for you?

Mr. Covarrubias. Yeah.

The President. Are there a lot of young people your age that need programs like this and aren't in them that you know of?

Mr. Covarrubias. Not that I can think of right now, but yeah.

The President. You think there are or there aren't? You think you're reaching most of the people?

What about you?

You have done well. Let's give the young men a hand. Let's give them a hand. They have done well. [*Applause*]

[*Mr. Burgess thanked the President for his participation and invited him to visit again.*]

The President. Thank you. I would like to, before I go, I would like to just very briefly thank Dr. Harter and the staff here at UNLV for letting us all come on a difficult day. And I want to thank Senator Reid and Senator Bryan for their support for these programs in Washington. And I want to thank all the folks here on the panel and the Governor and Mr. Wingett and especially you, Kirby.

But ladies and gentlemen, let me say again to you, I thank you for coming out today. If you look at these—when we leave here now, you look at these three boys sitting up here with me and remember what I told you. If I had told you 3½ years ago when I was inaugurated President that we would have 3 years of declining crime but that the crime rate among juveniles would go up, you would have a hard time believing that. We cannot let that be true 5 or 10 years from now. It will consume this country. It will change the whole way we live.

So if you really like what you have seen today, and you liked seeing these young folks up here sitting with the President, instead of being in trouble, and being nervous and doing the best they can to do something good—if you like that, then you need to support these programs, and you need to make sure every child in this State that needs it is in one. And you need to support these people that are doing it, because they are proof that we can turn this around, but we haven't gotten to everybody or the numbers wouldn't be what they are. And we have to do it.

This is a very urgent problem for our country, and we can only change it in two ways. One is, like Shane said, when people decide they are going to make a difference in their own lives, and secondly, when adults like you take responsibility in every community. We will keep trying to do our part, but remember, we need you. And if you liked this today, when you go out of here, make sure you're going to do something to turn this situation around.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the student union ballroom at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. In his remarks, he referred to Yvonne Atkinson-Gates, chairwoman, Clark County Commission; Mayor Jan Lavery Jones of Las Vegas, NV; and Carol Harter, president, University of Nevada at Las Vegas.

Remarks to the Community in Las Vegas

June 9, 1996

Thank you. Thank you for being outside. All those people in the heat out there, thank you very much. I want to thank the Green Valley High School band. Thank you for playing; you did a great job. I thank those who were here before: Thank you, Mayor Jones; thank you, County Commission Chair Yvonne Gates; thank you, Senator Titus; thank you, Representative Perkins. And most of all, thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for being here. I want to thank your fine Senators, Harry Reid and Dick Bryan, for representing you, standing up for you, and standing up for America in the United States Senate. They do a wonderful job.

And I want to thank Governor Bob Miller. You know, he has been the best sort of friend to me because he always tells me when he thinks I'm wrong. *[Laughter]* And he's been the best sort of Governor for you because even though he's my friend, he's first and foremost somebody who's always fighting for Nevada's interests. And every time he hears anything that might be even potentially bad for Nevada, I know the first call I'm going to get is from Bob Miller. He's made a lot of calls in the last 3½ years for you, and I thank him for that.

I also met someone earlier today, and I think he's in the crowd today—he's supposed to be up here with us—State Senator Bob Coffin, who's running for Congress here. I don't know if he's here, but I thought I would—is he back there? Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm glad to be back in Nevada. I like it here. I'm glad to be back in Las Vegas, which as all of you know was

my mother's favorite place on Earth. I've had a wonderful day already. I went out and visited one of your juvenile justice programs, where young people were doing community service and making restitution for mistakes they've made. And I met with some of the young people in the program and some of the adults who were working with them and some of the parents. And I want to compliment you for that.

And I want to ask everybody in this room to support people who are out there working with these young kids, trying to get them out of trouble, keep them out of trouble, give them something to do with their lives. We cannot—we cannot—tolerate the situation which now exists in the United States where the crime rate is going down overall but going up among people under 18. And it's because we don't have enough adults that are out there helping these kids to build good lives for themselves. And you've got some good programs here. I want you to support the people that are out there on the front lines in Las Vegas and Nevada working with those kids.

Four years ago when I came here and asked you to support me, I had an idea about what I wanted our country to look like as we move into this new century—a very different world. The world I grew up in was dominated by heavy industry and mass production. The world these children will grow up in will be dominated by computers, technology, and information. The world I grew up in had an America that was totally self-contained. We didn't sell much overseas; we didn't buy much from overseas. The cold war was the most important thing and the